

Appln. No.:  
Amdt. dated:  
Preliminary Amendment  
**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace the first full paragraph on page 1 with the following paragraph:

**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS --**

-- This is a National Stage Application of PCT/US03/31716 under 35 USC §371(a), which claims priority of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/416,372 filed October 4, 2002, entitled "Surgical Stapler with Universal Articulation and Tissue Pre-Clamp", now abandoned, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety. —